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BASIC CHRISTIANITY

The World Religion

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FOREWORD.

THIS book includes the substance of a series of addresses delivered in the Chapel of Ripon Hall, Oxford, to a congregation of educated people, friends and neighbours, some of whom expressed a desire that the addresses should be published.

The theme of the addresses is the need for a World Religion and how best to meet that need to-day.

I hope that those who are practising members of the Christian Churches and those who have ceased to be members of them may be led to consider the point of view which is here presented. For, to-day, not only is Christendom at the Cross Roads, but mankind; and there are many temptations to take the wrong turning, or—perhaps even more dangerous—to stand still. “To do nothing when we ought to be doing something”, said the late Francis Paget, “is the height of rashness”. The Universal Religion which the world needs, it is now within the world’s power to secure.

Then said Evangelist, “Do you see yonder shining Light?” The man said, “I think I do”. Then said Evangelist, “Keep that Light in your eye and go up directly thereto”.

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BASIC CHRISTIANITY

CHAPTER I

THE RELIGIOUS AWAKENING: ITS CHARACTERISTICS

THERE are signs of a reviving interest in Religion in this country. I do not mean among bishops and ministers of Religion: with them the interest is permanent because it is professional. Nor do I mean among scientific students of Religion ranging from anthropologists to psychologists: with them also, the interest is professional and permanent—not from the point of view of propaganda, as in the case of ministers of Religion, but from the point of view of research. What scientific students of Religion have done in this field has contributed to the revival of interest in Religion by leading to a better understanding among educated people of what Religion really is, and of the function it fulfils or can fulfil in human life. But these professional students cannot themselves be said to have experienced any revival of interest in Religion although they have contributed in some measure to that revival.

The revival of interest in Religion to-day in this country is among the general public, chiefly among the leaders of the general public—our political leaders, our men of letters, our educationists, our journalists, our philanthropists. Yet this revival of interest, notwithstanding the efforts of the Press and the B.B.C., has not

touched, so far as I can see, the rank and file of the nation—our uneducated classes. The classic saying:

“The Gods themselves contend in vain against ignorance”

is as true to-day as ever. This is why our educationists have taken up the matter of religious education, and in a manner which promises much better results than can be secured by the stunts and stumps—the sentimentalist, emotionalist, and dramatic appeals—of religious revivalists.

Can this religious revival claim to be a new development? The answer seems to be No and Yes. In our national history there have been, as in the case of the Christian Religion itself, a series of religious revivals. It is one of the significant, and indeed remarkable, characteristics of the Christian Religion that it possesses this power of revival, shared in some measure by all the great religions of mankind but pre-eminently by the Christian Religion. What is new about the present religious revival in this country is its *motive* and perhaps, as we shall see, its *method* also.

Former religious revivals have been individualist. They have been the response of the individual to his personal need of salvation: “What must I do to be saved?” This cry of the soul’s need was produced by the preaching of religious propagandists who themselves had felt a similar need and for whom that need had been satisfied as the result of a specific religious experience. In the Christian Religion this sense of personal religious need assumed two forms.

1. In the crudest form it was the need to escape from hell fire—a future existence of unending misery. In order to effect such an escape the individual must escape from sin—the guilt and burden of unforgiven sin which,

unless the individual could be released from it, must inevitably sink him into hell. Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* in certain striking passages illustrates this.

(2) The second form of religious revival was inspired by a much higher motive—not by physical and emotional terror, but by the realization of the moral and spiritual need of the personality, the need for a salvation which consisted in the seeking of the soul for that union with the Divine by which alone the individual was convinced deliverance could be secured from base passions, evil habits, and the sense of desolation and misery arising from helpless isolation from the Good. The classic examples of this type of religious conversion are those of St. Paul and St. Augustine.

“O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death! I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (*Rom.* vii. 24).

“O Lord, Thou hast made us for Thyself and our heart is restless till it rests in Thee” (*Confessions* i. 1).

This need for personal salvation finds heartfelt expression in the moving words of the Evangelical, Cowper:

“O for a closer walk with God,
A calm and heavenly frame:
A light to shine upon the road,
That leads me to the Lamb!”

It reaches an even higher level in the noble hymn, traditionally attributed to the Jesuit missionary, St. François Xavier¹:

“My God, I love thee: not because
I hope for heaven thereby,
Nor yet for fear that loving not
I might for ever die.

¹ Modern critical research has cast serious doubt on Xavier's authorship. See Dearmer's *Songs of Praise Discussed*, pp. 70-71.

Not with the hope of gaining aught,
Not seeking a reward:
But as thyself has loved me,
O ever-loving Lord!

So far as I can see, there are no signs to-day of a religious revival of this kind. Such questions as "What must I do to be saved?" or "How shall I spend eternity?" do not come into the picture, yet some Christians will feel that there can be no real religious revival without them. This is a question to be argued between the "once-born" and the "twice-born" as defined by William James in his *Varieties of Religious Experience*. We have no space to discuss this here. What is clear to us is that a religious revival is being born and that it is of a new kind.

This new-born religious revival is not individualist and other-worldly: it is social, national, international and unblushingly this-worldly. Its aim is to make this world a better world in order that it may make it a happier world, a more attractive world, a more all-round satisfying world for the human beings who live in it—a world in which international wars, national rivalries, curable disease, economic poverty, class strife, industrial unrest, suburban drabness, routine dullness and a sense of frustration and insecurity shall be eliminated. Those who would implement this programme of reform are by no means certain that it can be entirely achieved, but they are convinced that it is their duty to put their programme to the test in the interests of mankind and of a truly progressive civilization. They are convinced that one of the great factors, some would say the sole factor in achieving this triumph for human civilization is Science—the many-sided miracle of the

modern world. On the other hand there is a growing conviction among many that, essential as Science is as a factor in this programme of progress, Science by itself is not enough. There is another factor at least as important: it is Morality. The Chaplain of the Senate of the United States, speaking at that point of time at which the 19th century passed into the 20th century, predicted that future world historians would describe the 19th century as the Age of the Mechanical Forces, but the 20th century as the Age of the Moral Forces.

To Biblical prophets the terrific world wars which the 20th century has witnessed would seem to be the fitting prelude to such an age of moral revival; although to many of our contemporary bewildered sentimentalists and materialist humanitarians such appalling conflicts forebode no more than the breakdown of civilization and the recrudescence of barbarism. On the other hand those who take long and broad views of human history and regard it as neither irrational nor immoral are undaunted by our present sufferings and are prepared, at least in a spirit of faith, to share the Apostolic outlook that "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed to us-ward" (*Rom. viii. 18*).

This spirit of faith which is the supreme spirit of venture compels them not only to hope but also to strive to realize their hope. "Some better thing for us" is their practical motto. Others however would prefer the full Biblical phrase: "God has provided some better thing for us" (*Heb. xi. 40*). And it is these last especially who possess the conviction that not only Morality is needed in addition to Science to bring in this better world but that Religion also is a needful factor. The difference between these two types of contemporary

optimists is represented by the two forms of the motto of the city of Glasgow. To-day it runs: *Let Glasgow flourish*. When the foundations of Glasgow's prosperity were being laid, the motto ran: *Let Glasgow flourish by the preaching of the Word*.

If something has gone wrong with modern civilization, and perhaps not least in Glasgow, and certainly something has gone wrong with our civilization, the difference between the two forms of the motto of the city of Glasgow will perhaps explain it. At any rate there seems evidence that a growing number of influential men and women, many of them not outstanding adherents of any religious denomination, are becoming convinced that the religious factor is a needful factor in any sound progressive civilization and they would seem to have arrived at this conclusion as the result of modern anthropological, sociological and psychological studies, not as the result of a religious conversion of the older type.

Edward Gibbon's *dictum* that all religions are for the populace equally true, for the philosopher equally false, for the magistrate equally useful, fails to fit our modern situation. To-day, religions are becoming false for the populace, true for the philosophers and an unmitigated nuisance to rulers, if totalitarian.

I remember clearly what seemed to me to mark a turning point in our British attitude towards Religion when educated men were led to view it not from the other-worldly standpoint, but from the point of view of the value of Religion for us in this present world. This change was marked by the publication of Benjamin Kidd's *Social Evolution* which went through nine editions in 1894, the year of its publication. Its main contention, based solely upon anthropological, sociological and

historical research, was that Religion provides a needful "ultra-rational sanction" for sound social evolution. The function of Religion, so Benjamin Kidd asserts, is—"to secure in the stress of evolution the continual subordination of the interests of the individual units to the larger interests of the longer-lived social organism to which they belong.

"It is, it would appear, primarily through these social systems that natural selection must reach and act upon the race. It is from the ethical systems upon which they are founded that the resulting types of civilization receive those specific characteristics which, in the struggle for existence, influence in a preponderating degree the peoples affected by them" (p. 111). I had already spent four years as a student of Natural Science in a Colonial University when I read Kidd's book, and I felt after reading it that it contributed a really practical modern scientific explanation of the need for, and use of, Religion in human society. Of course I did not feel that Kidd's book covered the whole purpose of Religion. It had nothing to say of the function of Religion in developing the human personality for a future life by bringing the personality into vital relations with a spiritual world during this present life. But to deal with that function of Religion was not Kidd's purpose in this contribution of his to the study of Religion. Kidd's book was, of course, only one of a vast library which has grown up during the last eighty years dealing with what may be called the Science of Religion which falls into three main classes: (1) Comparative Religion; (2) History of Religion; (3) Psychology of Religion.

Arising from this vast collection of religious data, students have been led to realize not only that "mankind

is incurably religious", but that religions of the most varied kind have, in the long course of human evolution, played a most important part in social, moral and political development, and that of the scores of definitions of Religion which the Science of Religion has produced, the most practical and not the least profound definition is that Religion is "the inner side of Civilization". It is this valuation of Religion that is the most influential factor in our contemporary religious revival. The quality of a nation's religion is reflected in that nation's culture.

CHAPTER II

THE NEED FOR A WORLD RELIGION

WE have pointed out in dealing with the awakening sense of religious need in England to-day that it is not primarily individualist and other-worldly but social and this-worldly. Our moral and social condition, even before the present war, was causing alarm to serious observers. The enormous increase in youthful criminality: the hardly less alarming increase in divorce, illegitimacy and sexual delinquency, the declining level of public entertainments, the wide dissemination of pornographic literature, the recrudescence of astrology and superstition, the extension of betting and gambling, the lowered standard of common honesty and veracity, the growth of irresponsibility and lack of moral purpose among adolescents, called for action by those who had the welfare of the nation at heart; and it seemed equally clear that materialistic reforms in the spheres of universal employment, family allowances, better housing, better wages, better sanitation, better nutrition, better public health services, would not by themselves suffice to recover the situation. Something more profound was obviously required and this lay in the moral sphere.

Two thousand years ago a classical writer asserted that "its inherited moral standards constituted the foundation of the Roman Commonwealth. If these moral standards were forsaken the Commonwealth must collapse." That these moral standards rested upon a religion which had become unable to support them was not as clearly recognized by Cicero.

In our own age and country both of these facts are becoming clearer to the students of national life. Our home situation has been vividly lit up for us by what has been happening in foreign countries with which we have had close relations. National moral collapse has followed on national religious collapse except in one community (Russia) where a new religion has largely replaced the old.

As they survey the modern religious world, not a few intensely religious and moral people feel as did Ernest Renan:

"Entre une religion inintelligente et un matérialisme brutal, âme poétique et pure, où serait ta place?"

Men to-day are moved, in outlook at least, by the needs of mankind, not by the needs of the individual, feeling assured that if the needs of mankind can be satisfied the needs of the individual will, as he develops, be satisfied also.

The second war in which we are engaged has compelled us to realize that national remedies are unable to deal effectively with national ills. Only international remedies can heal effectively the ills from which we are suffering to-day. No water-tight system of national morals resting on a national religion will suffice. We need international morals based on a world-wide religion. This is not a double demand but a single one. A universal ethic, for nothing else than a universal ethic can be truly ethical, demands as its basis a Universal Religion. Where and how can such a Universal Religion be found? In this search for a Universal Religion how are we to proceed to-day? It seems to me that there are two possible methods. The first is the *synthetic method*.

The *synthetic method* demands, that after consultation

with the anthropologist, the psychologist, the metaphysician, the moralist, the mystic, and the sociologist as to what are the most essential and valuable constituents in Religion, we should combine all these constituents to produce a new World Religion.

Great difficulties face the religious reformer who adopts the *synthetic method*. The first difficulty is that we find it no easy matter to secure a plain answer from the religious authorities to whom we put our plain questions. In a number of cases they are not agreed: neither one department with another department nor the individuals within each department of research, and even when agreements are secured, they are often superficial rather than fundamental.

Pre-supposing that Religion expresses itself in the cultus of the Divine Nature, how are we to conceive of that Divine Nature and how are we to enter into relations with it?

The most primitive conception of the Divine Nature is animistic and consists of the deification of natural objects (animate and inanimate) and the deification of natural processes and forces.

Mankind seems next to have proceeded to the deification of its communal life in which the individual found his security, and fellowship, and welfare. Hence we have the tutelary Deities, the Guardian Gods of cities, nations, empires. In this stage the human king becomes Divine—the God of the Nation or else the Vice-gerent and representative of the God of the Nation.

The third great stage in the evolution of Religion is the product of personalities who may be described as men of religious genius whose religion came to them as the result of Divine inspiration. These men gave humanity the great “founded religions”, each of which

is the expression of the religious experiences and convictions of its founder. These "founded religions", as they are called, possess a vigour and vitality against which the older "customary religions" have no power of prolonged resistance. The religions founded by Moses, Gautama, Zarathustra, Mohammed and Jesus are of this quality.

It should be noted that in the three stages of religious evolution which I have outlined, each successive stage subsumes and retains in itself something of the religion of the earlier stage or stages. It is in the third stage that religious thought becomes monistic either in the form of monotheism or pantheism or atheism.

We fear the religious product of the *synthetic method* would be too artificial to appeal to, or overawe, the depths of the human soul as the great "founded religions" have done. Hence, in our research for a World Religion, we are only concerned with the great "founded religions". Each of these has been the gift of a great religious genius to mankind. These great religions are born of spiritual vision, moral passion, personal tragedy, the dark night of the soul.

"Who ne'er his bread in sorrow ate
Nor wept away the midnight hours
He knows You not, Ye Heavenly Powers."

Religion may be what man does with his solitariness—the flight of the alone to the Alone. There are always in these great "founded religions", at least for their creators, those elements which Otto describes as the *mysterium tremendum fascinans*.

We speak of religion born of this profound religious experience as being the gift of Divine Revelation, and those who are the organs of this gift repel with unutter-

able scorn those who demand that miracles should be wrought as proofs of the truth of the Divine Revelation which they have been inspired to proclaim to their fellow men.

"Why doth this generation seek a sign? Verily I say unto you, there shall no sign be given unto this generation" (*Mark* viii. 12).

The sceptics who have no first-hand experience of Divine Inspiration demand a miraculous proof: the superstitious populace re-echoes their demand and the religious impostor yields to it.

Talleyrand, *ci-devant* Bishop of Autun, was not a religious man, but he knew human nature especially in its weaknesses. To the inventor of a new religion who asked him how to advance it, he replied: "It has no hope of success unless you are prepared to be crucified, and rise again the third day."

In modern times there have been new religions artificially created—the Religion of Reason of the French Revolution, the Positivism of Auguste Comte (I think it was more than a philosophy, to judge by some of its English adherents), German Hitlerism and Russian Marxism. Although Marxism has declared that "Religion is the opiate of the people" it means no more by this than that the religions which it has displaced, or hoped to displace, possess this opiate quality. Christian Science and Spiritualism are not modern artificial creations. Christian Science is an American version of the religion of the New Testament. Spiritualism is much older than the Old Testament.

Besides the objection of artificiality, as militating against the general and permanent acceptance of a religion created by the *synthetic method*, there is also the objection arising from the extreme newness or modern-

ity of a *synthetic* religion. Living consciously in the midst of an evolutionary creative process, we value the new and value it highly; but to think rightly of the new we are compelled to think of the new as being created by the continuous operation of forces which are immensely old. Hence, in Religion (not perhaps in science) the old and the new have to be combined to secure the needful attraction and authority. Very significant is the saying of Jesus that the teacher who has become a pupil of the Kingdom of God brings forth out of his treasure things new and old. Eternity and time meet in Religion. Hence a religion which is to possess universality and finality—the ultimate religion of mankind—must have as its Deity, not only the *I am that I am*—the Eternal Self-existent—but also the *I will be what I will be*, the eternally self-revealing (*Exod. iii. 14, R.v.mg.*), the progressive unveiling of the eternal Goodness, the eternal Truth and the eternal Love in each succeeding stage of a developing human experience—Kipling's "God of our Fathers known of old" manifesting Himself to humanity in Tennyson's "Christ that is to be". It is not without significance that the Old Testament concludes with the Divine Promise:

"He shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children and the heart of the children to their fathers: lest I come and smite the earth with a curse" (*Mal. iv. 6*).

Human, moral and spiritual progress demands continuity between the old and the new: the older generation must value the contribution the younger generation is making and the younger generation must value the contribution which the older generation has made. How to adjust the authority of each is the problem. In pre-evolutionary thought, the authority of the old was absolute. With the advent of evolutionary thought

overwhelming authority is claimed for the new. Neither of these absolute claims can be conceded in Religion. Obedience to the Pauline axiom can alone settle their claims: "Test all: hold fast that which is good".

For these reasons it appears to me that any religion created to-day by the *synthetic method* has very poor prospects of becoming a Universal Religion.

I turn therefore to the second method of securing a Universal Religion. This is the *selective method*.

The *selective method* begins by scrutinizing all the most influential and promising of surviving World Religions and selecting from its rivals that religion which appears to possess the greatest prospects of universality and finality. When we think of the number and variety of existing religions this appears at first sight to be a task demanding great research and presenting extremely difficult problems of comparison and discrimination. Practically, this is not really the case. Books on contemporary religions are certainly very numerous—even the sacred Scriptures of these existing religions constitute a considerable library. The well-known series, *Sacred Books of the East*, runs into fifty volumes. It is, however, comparatively easy to select from all the existing religions those which have any real prospect of becoming universal. These great religions, as we may call them, are usually reckoned as ten. They are Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Judaism, Confucianism, Zoroastrianism, Taoism, Sikhism, Shinto, and Professor R. E. Hume adds Jainism.¹ Of these contemporary religions Christianity, Buddhism and Islam are pre-eminent.

¹ For a clear presentation of the beliefs and practices of these contemporary World Religions, compared with Christianity and criticized by modern Christian standards, I know of no better book for the

Judaism, the parent of Christianity and Islam, has no world prospects. The number of its adherents is 11 millions. The universal and progressive elements in Judaism have been incorporated into Christianity. Judaism shares its static elements with Islam which Renan described as "petrified Judaism". Although Hinduism (239 millions) comes next in numbers to Christianity (557 millions) it can never become more than the traditional religion of the ancient Aryan conquerors and their subjects in India. The caste system, which is an integral part of Hinduism, is anti-democratic and stands for the supremacy of a hierarchical aristocracy.

Shinto, the hereditary religion of Japan, is intensely national, and the Mikado is revered as a divine being. In its cultus Shinto is a mixture of Naturism, Animism and Polytheism. Its ethics are as mixed as its religious ideas.

Confucianism, the "Religion of Social Propriety", is an ethic rather than a cultus. Although its adherents (230 millions) are many in China, Confucianism has no prospects of extending beyond China.

Taoism, "The Religion of the Divine Way" is very attractive in its ideals, but very inadequate in its realization of them. Its adherents are confined to China, and it has no prospects outside Chinese civilization.

Zoroastrianism or Parseeism, the ancient religion of the Persian race which had a considerable influence upon pre-Christian Judaism and through it on primitive Christianity, although possessed of the noble ideal of contending strenuously on the side of the God of Light against the Power of darkness, has less than one million adherents to-day, and no future prospects.

general reader than *The World's Living Religions*. It is by Professor Robert Ernest Hume, the learned translator of *Upanishads*. (Published by T. and T. Clark, revised edition, 1938, 7s.)

Another most interesting religion is Sikhism, a synthetic religion whose founder, Nanak (A.D. 1469-1538) deliberately sought to combine in its tenets and practice the best elements of Hinduism and Islam. Its adherents are a noble body of men, but numerically few in comparison with either of the two religions of which Sikhism strove to become the higher synthesis.

Jainism in India, from the point of view of the future, counts for no more than does Taoism in China.

The only two serious rivals to Christianity are Islam and Buddhism. Islam has a great attraction for the lower races. Its simple monotheism and its plain practical legalist standards of conduct are the sources of its strength. Its weakness is its belief in the verbal inspiration and infallibility of the *Koran*, which deprives it of freedom and the power of adaptation and progress. In proportion as the human race progresses mentally, morally and spiritually, Islam must decrease in influence.

We are left with Buddhism as the great rival of Christianity, to which it presents important parallels—the attractive figure of its Christ, the Buddha, its admirable first five commandments, its great power of adaptation. Originally atheistic as in Thibet and Ceylon to-day, Buddhism has become Pantheistic in Burma and tends to become theistic in China and Japan.¹

¹ A Buddhist abbot called on me in Oxford, when the following dialogue took place:

Q. "I understand, abbot, that you are a Buddhist?"

A. "I am".

Q. "I understand that in Buddhism there is much difference of belief?"

A. "There is".

Q. "I understand that in Burma Buddhism is pantheistic?"

A. "It is pantheistic".

Q. "I understand that in China and Japan it is theistic?"

A. "It is teistic".

Q. "Is it pantheistic or theistic in your country, Ceylon?"

A. "It is ateistic".

In its attitude towards human life Buddhism is pessimistic: in its ethics it is essentially individualist, and passivist: in its religious practice mystical and mechanist. Its adherents so far have been limited to the races of the Far East, and although members of the Western races recognize the attractiveness of Buddhism, few have made the renunciation necessary to share in the religious experience which it offers.

The Christian Religion which is essentially optimistic, activist, ethical, world-consecrating rather than world-renouncing, seems to possess advantages as a World Religion over Buddhism. This is shown not only by the steadily increasing number of Christianity's adherents, but also by the fact that they are drawn from every race of mankind, and from every cultural and social level. Its propagandist enthusiasm, though checked at times and experiencing to-day serious set-backs in spheres where it was thought to be securely established, is yet as strongly and powerfully propagandist as it has ever been in the past, and its adherents constitute the leading nations of the world, not only in their intelligence but in the quality of their culture. Contemporary Christian civilization, although it abounds with defects, gives clear evidence of possessing a power to improve as it proceeds. The potency and promise possessed by the Christian Religion do not render its universality and finality assured in the future history of mankind, but they provide, from the Christian point of view, a good hope. This hope is the greater and stronger because many influential Christians are convinced that much of the past history of the Christian Religion has not done justice to the true quality of that religion; and that in the open spaces of the future, where truth, freedom and love will become more powerful influences in human society

than they are to-day, the Christian Religion will realize itself not only in the conservation, but also in the augmentation of moral and spiritual values, and that to a degree which it has not hitherto achieved.

Israel Zangwill in a play entitled "The Next Religion" which failed to receive the Lord Chamberlain's licence, shared this estimate and outlook.

The play concludes with the following dialogue:

"*Hal.* The *next* religion? Before we've worked out the last? What have you found more beautiful or uplifting than the words of Christ? And this religion has the advantage of being already organized—it carries the inspiration and consecration of the centuries.

"*Stephen.* And their encrustation of error! And their petrifications!

"*Hal.* Then vivify it, scour it, bring it back to the Founder. Perhaps Christ's own religion has never had a chance—perhaps *that's* the next religion".

CHAPTER III

THE RELEVANCE OF BASIC CHRISTIANITY

IN my last address, in dealing with a World Religion and how to secure it, it seemed broadly speaking that there were two possible methods: (1) the *synthetic* method, by which the religious experts would create a new religion composed of all the most valuable elements in Religion contributed by anthropologists, sociologists, psychologists, moralists, metaphysicians, and mystics. There seemed, however, to be little prospect of such a new *synthetic* religion becoming universal; (2) the *selective* method by which the most promising of the contemporary existing religions is chosen and every effort concentrated to fit it for a World Religion.

Examination of living religions led to the conclusion that the Christian Religion possesses the best prospects of achieving universality. Christianity has already the greatest number of professed adherents among the religions of mankind—some 550 millions. It has been successful in securing converts from the most varied races and cultural levels: it possesses great powers of adaptation which, combined with its other qualifications, seem to give it the potency and promise of universality and finality. So far so good.

Some of Christianity's critics may deny that it possesses this power of adaptation and the consequent qualities of expansion, victory and universality which such adaptability promises. This objection is not without foundation. Christianity is of two kinds. Since its earliest days there have been two forces within it which have been

engaged in deadly struggle for pre-eminence. The one set of forces may be described as static, traditionalist, legalist: the other set of forces as evolutionary, dynamic, freedom-loving. As against his fellow-Jewish Christians St. Paul declared that Christ's religion was not "a religion of the letter", drawing its authority from a system of laws and institutions: on the contrary it was "the religion of the Spirit"—inspired, prophetic, essentially free. It is this spiritual Christianity which is adaptable Christianity. Moreover, it is the true Christianity. It goes back to the Founder Himself; for, as St. Paul declared:

"With freedom did Christ set us free".

"Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty".

Christianity, while it retains these values, possesses the promise and potency of universality and of finality also.

When, however, the existing state of Christianity is scrutinized its prospects of universality and finality seem very far from promising. To-day, we see Christianity weakened by being split up into a hundred rival sects and schisms. We see it weakened by being enslaved to a vast variety of ordinances, regulations, traditions. We see it also weakened by various superstitions, errors, corruptions, due in many cases to its having incorporated various alien elements from religions older and lower than itself. When it was said to Dean Inge: "Catholicism is as old as Christianity", the Dean replied: "Yes, and a great deal older". Hence as Christianity exists at present, it seems to possess little chance of becoming universal. Within the present century, it has not advanced but declined. It has lost millions of adherents in Russia and Central Europe. Furthermore, even in Great Britain, in the United States, and in the British

Empire generally, it has far less hold upon the educated classes than it had two generations ago. Yet the situation for Christianity is not so weak as superficially it appears to be. First: there is to-day among the educated classes a growing sense of the need for Religion, especially in Great Britain and America. Secondly: it is becoming clear that the Christian Religion, in some form or other, is the only religion that can provide the desired spiritual and moral force which world unity demands. Moreover—and this is very important—there is a growing realization that all the weaknesses in contemporary Christianity which we have mentioned are not really of the essence of Christianity at all, but are non-Christian or anti-Christian, and that if Christianity is to realize itself and exert its true influence it ought to be purged from these defects. As Milton said of the Truth: “give her but room”.

To-day we are both interested and impressed by the promise and potency of Basic English as a universal language. This has been brought home to us by the translation of the New Testament into Basic English. It has been further emphasized by Mr. Winston Churchill's appointment of a Commission to investigate the qualifications of Basic English to become for all practical purposes the common language of mankind—the world's *lingua franca*. It is true that the idea of Basic English is not as new as we thought it was, since an Englishman in the “spacious times of great Elizabeth” originated the idea and attempted to implement it.

The problems connected with securing a common language for mankind afford a number of interesting parallels to the problems which arise when investigating the possibility of securing a World Religion. Many linguistic pioneers sought to secure a universal language

by the *synthetic* method. At least a hundred languages were invented by this means. We dimly remember Volapuc. Esperanto, still with us, and recently so popular, has now lost its popularity. It would seem that the *synthetic method* of securing a universal language has proved as dismal a failure as has the *synthetic method* of procuring a universal religion. It is the *selective method* which the creator of Basic English has used with such amazing success, and it is this *selective method* also which promises success to those who are bent upon securing a Universal Religion.

The methods of Basic English deserve the serious study of those who would create Basic Christianity and promote it as the Universal Religion.

What is Basic English primarily? It is a great simplification of the English language undertaken for the purpose of making that language the language of mankind. Of the 250,000 words in the *Oxford Dictionary* less than 1,000 have been selected to express in sentences of the simplest grammatical structure the vast majority of human experiences, needs, achievements, intentions and values.

If Christianity is to be rendered capable of becoming the Universal Religion of mankind, it needs to be subjected to some such parallel simplification. Its essential truth, its fundamental moral and spiritual values Basic Christianity will have to present to mankind expressed in the clearest, purest, simplest, most cogent and universal form. How is this to be done? What actual form is it to take? What is to be included, what excluded, what dogmas, what scriptures, what moral and spiritual values, what institutions is it to retain? Who is to authorize it as true and adequate? Will Basic Christianity require a new Church? Will it be possible

for those who accept Basic Christianity to be also members of other Christian denominations, and even members of other religions, e.g. Judaism, Islam, Sikhism, Buddhism, Confucianism, etc.? To some of these questions we hope to attempt answers later.

CHAPTER IV

WHAT IS BASIC CHRISTIANITY?

IN my last address dealing with the quest for a Universal Religion for the modern world, it seemed that this might best be supplied by what I had ventured to call "Basic Christianity". This Basic Christianity would consist of the most fundamental, universal and needful elements in historic Christianity expressed in the simplest and clearest terms. How is this to be secured? Historic Christianity is an enormous accumulation of heterogeneous elements not only immensely varied but also in not a few cases contradictory. Its literature comprises to-day at least half a million volumes: its sects number many hundreds: its forms of divine worship and its dogmas are almost as numerous as its sects. How then are we to select the most fundamental, universal and needful elements from this vast accumulation of religious faith, thought, practice and cultus accumulated during the last two thousand years?

This must be done by use of the *historic method*. When we study Christianity historically, beginning with its origins and their background, its subsequent stages of growth and development, Christianity can be divided roughly into some seven stages, each of which is successively superimposed, and subsumes, in part at least, the stage which precedes it and in some measure inter-fuses it.

(1) The first stage is the religion of Jesus Himself, His own religious faith and practice, His own worship of the Divine Being, His own moral and spiritual ideals,

exemplified particularly in His conduct and character, His words and deeds, the impression He made on His contemporaries.

(2) The second stage is the religion *about* Jesus—the religion of the Christ, the Church, the Sacraments. This religion which became known as the Christian Religion (*Acts* xi. 26) developed among the most primitive disciples of Jesus and those whom they converted to their belief in Jesus as the Christ. Their religion, the outcome of their unique experience with Jesus (*Acts* iv. 13), was expressed in terms of their Jewish thought, practice and culture. This religion *about* Jesus Christ is intimately bound up with the origin of the Christian Church; its experiences, beliefs, developments, organizations, practices, claims and expansion. Jesus was not the Founder of the Christian Church but its Foundation and on that Foundation, as St. Paul wrote, was not only laid “costly stones” but also “wood, hay, stubble” (1 *Cor.* iii. 12).

(3) The third stage is best described as the religion of dogmatic Christianity. In this stage, the Christian development was intensely concerned with the dogmatic formulation of its religious faith. Intricate disputes complicated these attempts at orthodox formulation: crowds of bishops hastened from place to place to sit in the councils which claimed the authority to decide these dogmatic controversies. Numerous creeds were composed—most of them only to be rejected. At last a single creed was adopted by the majority of the bishops of the Church at the Council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451) and the Church was left with a systematized theology and with a number of doctrinal schisms, some of which continue down to the present time.

(4) The fourth stage is best described as the religion of Imperial Christianity. It was produced by the adop-

tion of the Christian Religion as the State Religion of the Roman Empire. This triumph of Christianity (if such it may be called) led to its imperialization and partial paganization. In this period the Christian Religion suffered from an infusion of sub-Christian superstition.

(5) The fifth stage is that of the Papal Monarchy, the amazing movement by which the bishops of Rome established themselves as the heads of the Christian Church of the West and East and even strove, under that great genius Hildebrand, to exalt the Roman Catholic Church as politically supreme over Southern, Central and Western Europe.

(6) The sixth stage is that of scholastic Christianity; when the mendicant friars, especially the Dominicans and Franciscans entered the field of speculative theology and developed a new system of education which culminated in the foundation of the Universities of Southern, Western, Central and Northern Europe. In the end Scholastic Christianity lost the intellectual leadership of Europe when it decided that its conclusions could be theologically true although philosophically false.

(7) The seventh stage is that of Reformed Christianity. This was prompted by the desire to liberate the Christian Religion from the accumulated errors, superstitions, corruptions, immoralities and tyrannies with which it had become burdened and weakened. The ideal of this reformation was to be realized by the return of Christianity to the Bible (the Old Testament as well as the New) as the supreme authority for Christian faith and practice; especially as exemplified in the life of the Primitive Christian Church.

An extraordinary combination of causes contributed to the Reformation: the rise of nationalism, the breakdown of imperialism in State and Church, the invention

of printing, the discovery of the new world by Columbus, the discovery of the new heavens by Copernicus, the re-orientation and the re-creation of culture inspired by the discovery of Greek literature and art.

The Reformation of the Christian Religion took various forms in various localities. Lutheranism, Calvinism, Anabaptism, Socinianism, and last but not least, Christian Humanism—best exemplified and preserved in the Church of England when, for our English scholars, Greece rose from the dead with the New Testament in her hand.

A new stage in Reformed Christianity came into existence with the foundation of the Royal Society in England in the 17th century. Its real creator was Francis Bacon who died some decades before the foundation of the Royal Society. The Age of modern science dawned with the publication of Bacon's *Novum Organum*. As the methods of modern science established themselves: as the significance of its discoveries were realized in the sphere of religious thought, the Christian Reformation passed into the Christian Revolution in the midst of which we find ourselves to-day.

Some Christians are terrified, and believe that the growing triumph of the scientific spirit in the Christian Church must lead to Materialism, but they are vastly mistaken:

"It is true", wrote Francis Bacon, "that a little Philosophy inclineth man's mind to Atheism; but depth in Philosophy bringeth men's minds about to Religion."¹

In this passage, by "Philosophy" Bacon means Science; and by "Religion" he means True Religion.

But how are we to extract Basic Christianity from the

¹ Bacon's *Essays*: "Of Atheism".

vast mass of its Christian predecessors? Each stage has contributed something of value. Shall we select all these elements of value and construct our Basic Christianity by uniting them into a system?

As I have explained in a former address, I do not favour this eclectic and synthetic method in the sphere of religion: its product is too artificial and not sufficiently vital. A great religion is the creation of a religious genius. Our best method therefore is to return to the source whence Christianity originated—the religion of Jesus Himself. How this is to be done and what result it will yield I must reserve for my next address.

CHAPTER V

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

IN this address we are concerned to discover what was the religion of Jesus Christ Himself. Having decided to do this our difficulties are not at an end. Modern critical, literary and historical study of those Gospels which contain the most archaic and trustworthy sources for the Religion of Jesus indicates that these sources do not in all cases actually go back to Jesus Christ Himself. The whole of the Gospels therefore cannot be used for our purpose. We must select from them. But what principle is to determine the selection? We must first discover what is the leading theme, the great religious ideal to which Jesus dedicated Himself and His Mission. The answer is clear. His religious ideal is expressed in His Gospel of the Kingdom of God.¹

It was the supreme mission of Jesus to proclaim the Kingdom of God. The phrase comes from the Old Testament, but Jesus filled it with a new significance.

Modern critics may find in the recorded preaching of Jesus echoes and fragments and phrases from the Old Testament, the Apocrypha, the Pseudepigrapha, and the Talmud, but the Religion of Jesus as a whole was new, original, and we believe essentially consistent: the utterance of a religious genius. Many may dispute this, but I am compelled to express my own conviction.

His preaching of the Kingdom was marked by great

¹ The original Aramaic term is the Kingdom of the Heavens. I, however, shall use the later title, the Kingdom of God.

attractiveness. He called it the Gospel, the Good News or Glad Tidings of the Kingdom.

His preaching of the Kingdom was also marked by great *originality*. He declared that the Kingdom had arrived.

“When He was demanded of the Pharisees when the Kingdom of God should come, He answered them and said, the Kingdom of God cometh not with observation. Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for behold the Kingdom of God is within you (or among you)” (*Luke xvii. 20, 21*).

His preaching of the Kingdom was also marked by great *authority*. He cited neither the Scriptures nor the Rabbis in His preaching:

“Ye have heard that it was said to them of old time, but I say unto you” (*Matt. v. 22, 28, 32*).

The multitudes that heard Him—

“were astonished at His teaching: for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes” (*Mark i. 22*).

There are any number of questions which may be asked about the Gospel of the Kingdom as preached by Jesus, and most of them have double answers, due to the intermixture of literary sources in our Gospels; some derived from the teaching of John the Baptist: some derived from the utterance of Jesus Himself: some derived from the apostles and teachers of the Primitive Christian Church who in some cases reflected in their teaching even more of the beliefs of contemporary Judaism than of the teaching of Jesus Himself. We have no space to deal with all these controversial questions, fascinating as they are for the student of the Gospels and of Christian origins, since they are not of prime importance in our search for Basic Christianity. There are

however four central questions which we must ask about the Kingdom of God as presented to us in the Gospel accounts of the Mission and Message of Jesus if we are to learn what that Kingdom of God really means in the Religion of Jesus. These four questions ought to be prefaced by some definition of the Kingdom of God. Professor Hort of Cambridge defined the Kingdom of God as:

“The world of invisible laws by which God is ruling and blessing his creatures” (*Life and Letters* ii. 273).

This definition of the Kingdom, Professor Sanday of Oxford asserted was the best he knew. I would only venture a comment rather than a criticism. Dr. Hort was a scientist as well as a theologian and so he uses laws in his definition of the Kingdom. Jesus thought, not in terms of law, but of the operation of the Will of a personal God. Where that Divine Will prevails the Divine Kingdom is present, even as it was in the heart of Jesus. In the world of men, the Kingdom comes by human response to the Divine Will: not simply by passive submission and prayerful solicitation, but also by energetic action. The Barthian teaching, satirized in the following rhyme, is unsound:

“Sit down, oh men of God!
His Kingdom He will bring,
Whenever it shall please His Will,
You need not do a thing”.

(I) Our first question is: “Who is the King of the Kingdom?” The answer is “God”. This involves the more profound question: “What is He like?” Jesus thought of Him as the Divine Father of Man. God’s rule was based upon love: Jesus did not think of this rule as arbitrary: it permitted a freedom of choice to

men such as is exhibited in the Parable unhappily named, the Parable of the Prodigal Son, for really it is the Parable of the Perfect Father.

(II) Our second question is: "Who are the subjects of the Kingdom?" Let it be noted that Jesus does not call them "subjects", but sons—"Sons of the Kingdom" or "Children of my Father which is in Heaven". Viewed under this aspect, the members of the Kingdom are members of a divine family. God is the Divine Father, and members of the Kingdom are brothers. Who are these sons of the Kingdom? Potentially, the whole human race of rational, moral and spiritual beings—actually those who are striving to realize in their character and conduct the ideal of divine sonship. They are described for us in the seven Beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount¹ (*Matt.* v. 3-15).

These Beatitudes may be rightly rendered thus:

(1) Blessed are the holy and humble men of heart, for theirs is the Kingdom of God.²

(2) Blessed are they that mourn for sin (their own and that of their community) for they shall be comforted.

(3) Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after the righteousness of the Kingdom: for they shall be filled.

(4) Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

(5) Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

¹ I reckon the Beatitudes as seven, since "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth" is not original, but is derived from Psalm xxxvii. 11.

² The old rendering to which we are accustomed, "Blessed are the poor in spirit", is misleading and inadequate.

(6) Blessed are the Peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

(7) Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the Kingdom of God.

Jesus also declared that the sons of the Kingdom were the "salt of the earth" and the "light of the world"—the salt which preserves human society from corruption, the light which delivers it from mental, moral and spiritual obscurantism.

(III) Our third question is: "What are the duties of the sons of the Kingdom?" It might be replied that their sole duty is "To realize the values of the Kingdom in the development of the personality of each as set forth in the Seven Beatitudes".

This answer is sound so far as it goes, but could be so put into practice as to develop a very self-centred, passive and mystical type of personality. The duties of the sons of the Kingdom are most clearly and comprehensively expressed in the Two Great Commandments as set forth by Jesus:

(1) The first and great commandment is this: thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.

That great scholar, Dr. R. H. Charles, thought there was good reason for believing that "with all thy mind" was an addition made by Jesus Himself to the original Old Testament Commandment which He cited (*Deut.* vi. 5). If this be so, it proves the stress which Jesus laid upon the exercise of the mind in the duty of loving God.

(2) The second commandment is like unto the first: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself (*Lev.* xix. 18).

Love is the common demand in both the Great Com-

mandments. In the case of our duty to God, love expresses itself in obedience to the Will of God: in the case of our neighbour it expresses itself by service given to the welfare of our neighbour.

Does this duty of service to our neighbour go so far as to exclude the duty of service to ourselves?

"No" and "Yes". Archbishop Randall Davidson maintained that the phrase "as thyself" prohibited the view that Jesus here taught the exclusion of self-love. This he maintained in a sermon entitled "Self Love Justified".

That great moral philosopher, Dr. Hastings Rashdall, took the same view. It is to be observed, however, that there is an order in the claim of love made on the sons of the Kingdom: the love of God comes first, the love of our neighbour second, love of ourself third. Where the claim of God in our life, or the claim of the Kingdom on our loyalty clashes with love of self, self must be sacrificed if we are true to the example of Jesus Christ: "Father, not my will but Thine be done".

Another matter for consideration in understanding and practising the Two Great Commandments is: What meaning ought we to attach to "neighbour"? In *Leviticus* xix. 18, "neighbour" meant for the Jew his fellow-Israelite. Hence, if a Jew to-day does not "lift a finger to help a Gentile", he is acting in strict obedience to the letter of the Second Great Commandment as expressed in *Leviticus* xix. 18, but if a son of the Kingdom will not lift a finger to help a Jew, he is disobeying the whole spirit of that Commandment as Jesus Christ taught it to His disciples.

When asked in this connection, "Who is my neighbour?" Jesus told the Parable of the Good Samaritan who, at the risk of his own life, helped a Jew in dire

extremity—although the Jews at that time were most bitter national and religious antagonists of the Samaritans. For Jesus the “neighbour” to whom love was due . . . the man with whom we come into contact, who is in need of our help and whom we are able to help. The love demanded is not sentimental nor emotional but moral and practical, love not as an emotion but love as motive of action. Emotional love we cannot give at command, but moral love can be rightly commanded by God and can be and ought to be given by man in obedience to that command.

There are many other duties of the sons of the Kingdom, but they are all derived from and are dependent upon the primary duty of love to God and Man. Hence Jesus concluded His enunciation of the Two Great Commandments with the words:

“On these two Commandments hang all the law and the prophets: there is none other commandment greater than these” (*Mark xii. 31*).

In the Parable of Divine Judgement, known as the Sheep and the Goats, the lesson is taught that the love we show to Man is accepted by God as love shown to Himself.

(IV) Our fourth question is: “What is the Faith of the sons of the Kingdom”? In what creed is it expressed? Where is this creed to be found?

An English Bishop was once asked: “What is the Christian Faith?” He replied: “I should prefer to tell you, not what it is, but where it is to be found. It is to be found here,” said he, laying his hand on the New Testament. That is a good answer for the student, but it hardly meets the case of the plain man. Surely there is a briefer and simpler answer. The Christian dogmatist will say: The Christian Faith is to be found in the

Apostles' creed. The Christian moralist will reply: That answer is superficial: it is not what a man professes with his lips in a formal creed but what he expresses in his conduct and character which tells us what his faith really is. There is a truer and more profound answer than that given either by the Christian dogmatist or by the Christian moralist. This answer is to be found in a man's prayers. His prayers tell us not only what a man really is morally and spiritually, but what he desires to become.

If "to work is to pray" (*laborare est orare*) be true: not less true is it that "to pray is to work" (*orare est laborare*), but more true than either is *lex orandi est lex credendi*—the law of faith is the law of prayer.

Prayer is the profoundest expression of religious faith. The faith of the sons of the Kingdom is expressed in the prayer of the sons of the Kingdom. That is the creed of the sons of the Kingdom and that prayer is the Lord's Prayer—the prayer which Jesus Himself gave to His disciples.

We have two forms of the Lord's Prayer, one preserved in the Gospel of Matthew:

Our Father which art in Heaven,
Hallowed be thy name.

Thy Kingdom come,
Thy will be done,
in earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that
trespass against us.

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil:
For thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the
glory,

for ever and ever. Amen. (*Matt. vi. 9 ff.*)

The other is given in the Gospel of Luke:

Father,

Hallowed be thy name.

Thy Kingdom come.

Give us day by day our daily bread.

And forgive us our sins: for we ourselves also
forgive every one that is indebted to us.

And bring us not into temptation. (*Luke xi. 2 ff.*)

The version given in the Gospel of Luke is briefer and is more probably the original form of the prayer. That given in the Gospel of Matthew is an expanded form, systematized and arranged after the model of a Jewish Synagogue prayer, and the Christian Church, in selecting Matthew's form for public worship, has done well. There is no need to expound this prayer at length. In Matthew's version it falls into two divisions of three petitions each. The first three pray for the Coming of our Father's Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. Wherever God is revered and His Will is done, His Kingdom comes.

The second three petitions voice our personal needs, bodily, moral and spiritual. They are the needs of each son of the Kingdom, but they are not prayed for by individualists but socially—we and our, not I and my. The formula with which the Lord's Prayer concludes is a Jewish doxology. It is offered to the God of the Kingdom. Every time the son of the Kingdom utters this prayer from the heart he confesses his faith.

What a magnificent Prayer-Creed is the Lord's Prayer in its simplicity, profundity and universality. It could be said by Jews, Mohammedans and Theistic Buddhists. It is the most unifying religious formula in the world, and I doubt whether the Christian Church has any spiritual and moral authority to refuse membership to

those who can and will say this Creed-Prayer from the heart.

I have now answered very briefly the four central questions which make clear what is the essential character of the Kingdom of God as Jesus preached it. There are a number of original and striking features of the Kingdom which I have not dealt with. For instance, that they who seek the Kingdom first, secure as a by-product of their seeking of the Kingdom all things necessary for this life, i.e. the satisfaction of their material needs. Again, another original feature of the Kingdom is that only the adult who is willing to become as a little child can find entrance into the Kingdom. Another feature of the Kingdom is that the great personages in the Kingdom are not its rulers but its servants. With them to serve is to reign.

Within this framework of the Kingdom of God the Religion of Jesus is enshrined—that Kingdom which it was His supreme office and mission to proclaim and establish and on behalf of which He died.

The kingdoms of the earth go by
In purple and in gold;
They rise, they triumph, and they die,
And all their tale is told.

One Kingdom only is divine,
Its banner triumphs still;
Its king a servant, and its sign
A gibbet on a hill.

The Religion of the Kingdom of God, in the simple and practical form in which I have presented it, possesses those qualities which a universal religion demands. It is so simple that all to whom it is taught can understand

it: it is so profound that it can meet the deepest needs of the moral and spiritual consciousness: it is so practicable that it can contribute what is absolutely needful to the developing, personal, social, national and international life of mankind: it is so adaptable that, while able to help the life of each individual, it can contribute simultaneously to the evolution and unity of the human race. Possessing the power of infinite development it will neither need to be replaced nor indeed can be replaced by any religion of a higher quality.

Last, but not least, Basic Christianity as the Religion of the Kingdom of God is free from a great number of needless objections and difficulties which stand between the modern educated man and his acceptance of the Christian Religion in its traditional forms.

One of the most influential chaplains in the Great War, Studdert Kennedy, complained:

"It is awful to realize that when one stands up to preach Christ, the soldier feels that you are defending a whole ruck of obsolete theories and antiquated muddles".

No such complaint can be levelled against the Religion of the Kingdom of God as we have here presented it.

In conclusion I venture one more question: Would it not be well if we could substitute for "Christianity" the "Kingdom of God" as the name of our religion? Christianity is derived from a nickname "Christian" given to the disciples of Jesus by the wits of Antioch (*Acts xi. 26*). Like most nicknames it stuck, but it was a poor name for our religion compared with the Kingdom of God. No doubt it was needful, if the early Christian missionaries were not to be arrested as revolutionaries,

that they should drop the title Kingdom of God, but that is no reason why it should not be re-assumed to-day. I venture to think that Basic Christianity, in going back to the Religion of Jesus Himself, would also do well to go back to His own name for His Religion.

CHAPTER VI

JESUS AND THE KINGDOM

MY four questions about the Kingdom and their answers have said nothing about the relation of Jesus to the Kingdom except that He proclaimed the good news of it.

What was His position in the Kingdom of God? Did He proclaim Himself as under God the King of that Kingdom, its Messiah or Viceroy whose divine and regal authority must be accepted as a preliminary by every one who would become a member of that Kingdom?

This is no easy question to answer because in the New Testament generally and even in the Gospels we have two conflicting answers. One answer is that of Jesus Himself: the other answer is that of the Christian Church.

I should not attempt to deal with so difficult a problem here if it were not of very great practical importance. The problem is not, and we cannot be too clear on this point: Was Jesus the Son of God, the Viceroy of the Divine Kingdom, the possessor of a Name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow? but: Whether Jesus Himself taught that this must be accepted and professed by every one as an absolutely necessary preliminary for entry into the Kingdom of God?

Christian history, beginning in the New Testament and extending down to the present time, clearly shews that the vast majority of Christian authorities are con-

vinced that Jesus did lay down this condition for entrance into the Kingdom of God.

My own conviction is that Jesus did not teach this. According to His teaching entry into the Kingdom of God demanded the acceptance of His Gospel of the Kingdom in the essential form in which I have presented it in my answers to the four questions in a preceding address (p. 32).

Jesus laid the greatest emphasis upon the acceptance of His Gospel in the practical form of obedience to it: but, provided men obeyed, He cared nothing for their professions of belief in Him as the Son of God, the Christ, the Messiah. Men entered the Kingdom by their faith in what He taught as God's good news to men—a faith which must shew itself in obedience or else it was not faith at all. This comes out most clearly in such undoubted sayings of Jesus as:

“Not every one that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven but he that doeth the Will of my Father which is in heaven”.

Faith in His Gospel and obedience to it was what Jesus demanded: there could be no substitute for it. Yet how many have been willing to offer substitutes; and has not the long history of the Christian Church provided any number of painful examples of Christendom offering to God these substitutes—ecclesiastical, dogmatic, sacramental, sacerdotal, ascetic?

I do not wish to give pain to traditionalist Christians by naming these substitutes; for were I to do so, I should seem to be attacking not a few of the most cherished beliefs and practices of Christian churches, and perhaps be diverting attention from my main proposition.

The fact which modern scientific study of the Gospels has established is that Jesus proclaimed first and foremost

the Kingdom of God. He did not proclaim Himself first and foremost as the Messiah.

It is not at all surprising that before the Higher Criticism of the New Testament had come into existence the Christian Church should have thought of Jesus as engaged first and foremost in preaching His Messiahship. The Fourth Gospel presents Him as doing this on every possible occasion and from the very outset of His Ministry.

I cannot here engage in the intricate question of the historicity of the Fourth Gospel as a whole, but I am compelled to assert that there is convincing evidence that on this point of the public proclamation of His Messiahship by Jesus as the earliest and central theme of His preaching, the Fourth Gospel is unhistorical. Schweitzer, in his arresting volume, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, makes this clear in his section dealing with the Messianic Secret (chapter xix).

Judaism, in the days of Jesus, was throbbing with Messianic expectations, and many who came into contact with Jesus in His ministry believed Him to be the Messiah—not a few of them were the madmen whom Jesus had exorcised. When, however, they asserted Him to be the Messiah, He silenced them sharply. When, at last, towards the end of His ministry, His chief Apostle, St. Peter, hailed Jesus as the Messiah, Jesus, if we follow *Mark* (the earliest of our Gospels and, according to primitive tradition, the record of St. Peter's reminiscences of Jesus) accepted the statement but only in order to tell His apostles two things:

(1) That Messiahship did not mean Kingship for Him in the form in which all Jews anticipated it, but, on the contrary, repudiation and execution.

(2) That the apostles were on no account to proclaim Him as the Messiah.

Only on the occasion of His last visit to Jerusalem did Jesus, by two symbolic acts fulfilling Old Testament oracles, present His Messiahship to His nation, and then in a form not in accordance with national expectation. These acts were: His riding into Jerusalem on an ass (*Zech.* ix. 9) and His cleansing of the Temple (*Mal.* iii. 1).

In His last recorded parable, "The Tenants of the Vineyard who slew the heir of the Vineyard", it is not the regal status of the heir which is taught, but the abominable crime of the tenants.

Only, when on the eve of His execution, standing as a prisoner before the Sanhedrin (the High Court of Judaism), Jesus is challenged by the High priest to say whether He is the Messiah or not, does He answer in the affirmative. Had He failed to answer in the affirmative then, He would have hopelessly discredited His Gospel. The precise words in which Jesus made the affirmation are in doubt since it seems improbable that there were any of His disciples present to hear what He said. Nevertheless the evidence that Jesus did make the affirmation is historically convincing.

From this it is clear that to secure the acceptance of His Messiahship by His hearers was not the purpose of the public ministry of Jesus. The proclamation of the Gospel of the Kingdom constituted His mission and message. This being granted, it is evident that Jesus could not have regarded acceptance of His Messiahship as a needful preliminary for entrance into the Kingdom of God.

Personally I am convinced that Jesus believed Himself to be divinely sent and divinely inspired to proclaim the

advent of the Kingdom of God, the true nature of that Kingdom, the true conditions of entrance into it, and the manifold blessings which the Life of the Kingdom bestows.¹

The narratives of the Baptism of Jesus, and of His threefold temptation in the wilderness, stress that He possessed this "Messianic consciousness" at the very outset of His ministry, and that He rejected as ideals of the Kingdom of God economic materialism, political domination and the conversion of men to belief in Himself based on the working of miracles.

If the Kingdom of God as Jesus understood it was not economic, political, miraculous, how are we to describe it? It was *prophetic*. By *prophetic* I mean that the Kingdom exercises its authority and promotes its extension by the affirmation and presentation of moral and spiritual ideals inspired by God through the acceptance of which the individual becomes himself transformed and exercises in turn a transforming influence on his environment. Jesus was not an economic, political, hierarchical Messiah, but the Prophetic Messiah of the Prophetic Kingdom of God. He was the forth-speaker for God, and the Kingdom came wherever obedience was yielded to the prophetic utterance of the Divine Will.

It is extraordinarily difficult apparently for many Christians to realize the amazing self-abnegation of Jesus. Unless the claims of the Kingdom and the moral and spiritual authority of its Good News demanded it, He never put Himself into the picture; and, moreover, He seems to have felt no satisfaction what-

¹ Everywhere, save in the dialogues of Jesus with Nicodemus and Pilate, the Fourth Gospel substitutes Eternal Life for the Kingdom of God.

soever when others tried to put Him into it. When the afflicted claimed that Jesus had healed them by His power He replied: 'Go in peace. Thy Faith hath healed thee'. When men called him "Lord, Lord" it annoyed Him almost as much as did the rich young man who called Him "Good Master", and immediately afterwards rejected the exacting path of discipleship.

Many years ago, one who is now a diocesan Bishop asked me, as we were crossing Sir Isaac Newton's Bridge from Queens' College into the "Backs" of Cambridge: "Do you think when Jesus spoke of him that is least in the Kingdom, He spoke of Himself?" I could only answer: "I had never thought of that". But I have thought of it many times since. Like Francis of Assisi twelve hundred years later who called his followers "the lesser ones", the Minorites, the *Fratricelli*, so Jesus called His disciples the little ones (*Matt. x. 42*).

Is it possible after speaking of John the Baptist as the greatest of the Old Order, He could have referred to Himself as the least in the New Order of the Kingdom?

It is possible, but if that was the meaning of this saying of Jesus it was quickly forgotten by His disciples in the glory that followed. This self-abnegation of Jesus was one with which the Christian Church, for various reasons (which we cannot deal with here) could not concur. The Church was convinced that the Divine Father could not concur with it either. The self-abnegation of Jesus was followed by Divine Exaltation. This is expressed in the classic passage in St. Paul's *Epistle to the Philippians*:

"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus: who being essentially divine did not count equality with God something to be snatched, but emptied himself, becoming obedient even unto death,

yea, the death of the cross. Wherefore also God highly exalted him, and gave unto him the name which is above every name: that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (*Phil. ii. 5-11*).

"The Kingdom of Science", said Francis Bacon, "like the Kingdom of God, is only entered in the person of a little child".

The Kingdom of God, like the Kingdom of Science makes no other preliminary demand from those who would enter it than that it should be treated experimentally and practically as a working hypothesis. "This do and thou shalt live".

It is only by entering into the Kingdom and living in obedience to its ideals and duties that men can come to know who Jesus is.

The only real way of knowing God is to become like God, and the only real way of knowing Jesus is by becoming a son of the Kingdom.

"The Christian Religion refuses to be proved first and practised afterwards. Its practice and its proof go hand in hand".

CHAPTER VII

OBJECTIONS TO BASIC CHRISTIANITY

I PROPOSE in this address to deal with a number of objections to Basic Christianity which may very properly be raised by the traditionalist Christian. The first and most important objection is this:

I

Will not Basic Christianity, by putting the Kingdom of God in the forefront and by declining to insist upon a preliminary Confession of Jesus as the Incarnate Son of God, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, lead the adherents of Basic Christianity away from Jesus and reduce Him to insignificance?

To this question we answer emphatically, "No". Far from leading men away from Jesus, we are convinced that Basic Christianity must lead many back to Him, and to all that is most essential, universal and practical in His teaching and example. In the first century of our era, St. Paul wrote to his fellow-Christians: "Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, even Jesus Christ".

But let us be clear on this point. What precisely does this involve? Does this demand a return to the Jesus of History and then refusing to advance beyond Him? Such a procedure would be to misunderstand Jesus and His Religion. It has been said of two great teachers of philosophy: that to understand Kant is to know that one must go beyond Kant; but that to understand Hegel is to know that one cannot go beyond Hegel. This is true

of Jesus and His Religion. Our modern needs, our modern knowledge, our modern outlook, all demand that in some respects we should advance beyond the Jesus of history. There are things ascribed to Him in the Gospels, such as the exorcising of demons as a means of curing disease, which modern medical science has discredited and which, in the name of the Christian Religion, may not and must not be taught as true to-day, or as a needful part of the Christian Faith.

"Even though", said St. Paul, "we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now know we him so no more" (2 Cor. v. 16).

This cannot be taken to mean that the modern man has no need to study and understand the Jesus of History, nor that the great principles and ideals of the moral and spiritual life preserved in the records of that historic personality do not deserve the most attentive study, for it is only through His humanity that we can come to apprehend His Divinity. What it does mean is that the many limitations which of necessity restricted that historic personality in His local, temporal, cultural environment need not, and ought not, to restrict the disciples of Jesus in later ages.

When this point is reached, the leadership of Jesus forward for modern men becomes leadership under the guidance of His Spirit of Truth. This will entail unflinching loyalty to His principles, but not necessarily a literal obedience to His precepts.¹

Thus we return to the historic Jesus in order that we may go forward from the historic Jesus under the guidance of His Spirit. Jesus is recorded in the Fourth

¹ See Rashdall's *Conscience and Christ*, published by Duckworth, 1916.

Gospel as saying to the disciples at the close of His earthly ministry:

"I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth is come, he shall guide you into all the truth. . . . He shall glorify me: for he shall take of mine, and shall declare it unto you. All things whatsoever the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he taketh of mine, and shall declare it unto you" (*John xvi. 12-15*).¹

In this spiritual progress we return to the Jesus of History with His essential and eternal Gospel, and inspired by that contact we go forward under the leadership of His Spirit of Truth, which knows no temporal limitations, no local restrictions, no mental disabilities. Universality and finality are the characteristics of this spiritual guidance and progress:

"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God".

II

The second objection is this: Granted that Basic Christianity will not lead those who adopt it away from Jesus, by which we mean the Jesus of History and His Spirit of Truth, will it not lead its adherents away from Catholic Theology and especially from the Christ of Catholic Theology?

I certainly think that the adherents of Basic Christianity will have no relation at all with Catholic Theology inasmuch as Basic Christianity will not make use of the technical terminology of Catholic Theology and

¹ Possibly this passage is the affirmation of the spiritual experience of its writer rather than an actual verbal utterance by the Jesus of History.

will not be dominated by its thought-forms. Most of the adherents of Basic Christianity will not actually be led away from Catholic Theology because they have never been led to it, nor possessed it. The main affirmations of Catholic Theology such as the Unity and Fatherhood of God, the essentially Divine Nature of Jesus, the creative inspiring presence of the Divine Spirit, the adherents of Basic Christianity will make, but will express those affirmations in their own language and thought-forms. There will be no loss to Christian Faith in this; for the Faith is deeper and higher and wider than the theological systems which have sought throughout the history of Christianity to express that Faith. In the well-known lines of Tennyson:

“Our little systems have their day:
They have their day and cease to be:
They are but broken lights of thee,
And thou, O Lord, art more than they.”

What I have here said of Catholic Theology applies similarly to the Christ of Catholic Theology.

In Basic Christianity the Jesus of History and His Spirit of Truth will, for practical purposes, replace the Christ of Catholic Dogma. There will be no loss in this, but on the contrary immense gain. How few there are among lay people and even among the clergy who really understand the Catholic Theology and are technically orthodox. This is not surprising. Catholic Theology is too archaic and too technical. It is based on a pre-scientific study of the Bible and upon categories of Greek philosophy which are remote from modern ways of thinking. Catholic Theology, because not understood, misrepresents our Lord to vast multitudes in modern Christendom. It seems to present Him to them as a

psychological monstrosity, and a miraculous incredibility.

The adherent of Basic Christianity, thinking of our Lord as not less Divine because more truly human in many ways than traditionalist Christianity has assumed Him to be, will demand no more definition than is used in Tennyson's familiar verse:

"Thou seemest human and divine,
The highest, holiest manhood thou:
Our wills are ours, we know not how:
Our wills are ours, to make them thine."

Dean Colet (with the possible exception of Hugh Latimer), the noblest figure in the English Reformation and a loyal son of the New Learning which he sought to promote, especially by his great scholastic foundation in the Metropolis of which his father had been Lord Mayor, represents in these matters the mind of the English citizen of to-day—if the English citizen ever gives his mind to such subjects. Edith Sichel in her charming volume, *The Renaissance* (H.U.L.), writes of Colet:

"The Schoolmen, he hated, and chief among them Aquinas, who would not (he said) have laid down the law so boldly on all things in heaven and earth if he had not been an arrogant fool" (p. 179).

This, of course, is not just to Aquinas whose great intellect sought to harmonize Faith and Reason; but it rightly condemns the scholastic methods which he used. The spirit of Shakespeare reflects the modern mind, which in his day was replacing the mediaeval mind. "There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy".

Definition, or over-definition, in Religion does not

impress or inspire the modern mind, but merely irritates it. The Christian Church therefore will not lose as a teacher of spiritual and moral truth if it reverently discards dogmatic systems (whether Catholic or Protestant) as something which, whatever their value in the past, have lost it in this age for all except professional scholastics and their little company of amateur pupils.

The Church's method of teaching Doctrine has to be changed and certainly will change. Indeed, it is changing more than many realize to-day. This so far as the Church of England is concerned is demonstrated by the *Doctrinal Report* of 1938.¹ This change was predicted by Archbishop Frederick Temple, the father of our present Primate, in 1857:

"Our theology has been cast in a scholastic mould, i.e. all based on Logic. We are in need of and we are being gradually forced into a theology based on psychology. The transition, I fear, will not be without much pain; but nothing can prevent it."

The Church, however, will suffer no discredit because of such a change except with those who affirm that the Church is infallible and that its Sacred Tradition is expressed in irreformable dogmas. Edmund Burke declared that the Church of England is the only Church which professes fallibility. May we hope that the rest of Christendom will follow that Church's example? Such ecclesiastical humility would prepare the way for the acceptance of Basic Christianity by Christendom.

"I beseech you, in the bowels of Jesus Christ", said Oliver Cromwell to a body of Puritan divines, "to conceive it possible that you may be mistaken."

¹ *Doctrine in The Church of England*, S.P.C.K., 1938.

III

I pass to a third objection.

Must not the acceptance of Basic Christianity or the Religion of the Kingdom lead to the "scrapping" of all our church institutions including the Church itself? You say that the Religion of the Kingdom is older than the Church and that the Church was not founded by Jesus. Does that mean that the Church can have no place in the Religion of the Kingdom?

Certainly Jesus was not the Founder of the Church. Those passages in St. Matthew's Gospel which contain the word Church (*Matt.* xvi. 18: xviii. 17) do not go back to the Jesus of History. The Christian Church cannot claim historically that Jesus organized its constitution and government during the forty days between the Resurrection and the Ascension as traditionalists are taught to believe.

But although Jesus is not the Founder of the Church, He may be rightly claimed to be its foundation, as St. Paul wrote:

'Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid even Jesus Christ' (1 *Cor.* iii. 11).

Without Jesus there would have been no Church and without the Church there would have been no Religion of Jesus in the world to-day. Societies need to be created in order to preserve and propagate truths, principles, ideals which not seldom they have at a later period strangled and buried.

When it is claimed that the Church was created by the Divine Spirit, if we believe in the creative activity of the Divine Spirit operating in the process in which mankind exists, then we can accept this claim as justified in the case of the Church and its institutions. In that

case the adherent of Basic Christianity will not demand the destruction of the Christian Church and its institutions, but he will insist that a society which claims to have been created by the operation of the Divine Spirit is under an obligation to be continually conformed and transformed and renewed by the operation of the same Spirit. Immutability and irreformability of entities in our evolutionary creative process must inevitably lead to their decreasing usefulness and ultimate dissolution. In the words of Cardinal Newman:

“To live is to change, to be perfect is to have changed often.”

Change therefore will be one of the marks of the true Church, and its successive changes will be in obedience to the inspiration of the Spirit of Truth which created the Church—*Ex umbris et imaginibus in lucem*.¹ “Forth from the shadows and the half-lights into the light.”

It is the environment of the Church and the needs of the Church and the effective discharge of its functions by the Church, which under the creative urge of the Spirit of Truth, will inspire its repeated transformation. Nothing in the Church which cannot justify itself at the bar of spiritual, moral and rational religion can be permitted to remain unchanged and undeveloped. The adherents of Basic Christianity are not iconoclasts in the sense that they wish to destroy or cast down, but they are spiritual, moral and rational evolutionaries. There is only one Church which can serve the Coming of the Kingdom and that is the Church of the Spirit of Truth, Love and Freedom.

IV

There is a fourth objection to be considered. Granted that Basic Christianity is not out to destroy the Church

¹ From J. H. Newman's epitaph.

and its institutions; yet will it not deprive the Church of its august authority and the Church's venerable Ministry, Sacraments and Rites of their reverent estimation?

The answer is Yes and No. Yes, if the Church is not living and working in accordance with the transforming demands of the Spirit of Truth: No, if the Church is being transformed effectively and fruitfully under the inspiration of that Spirit.

The ideal ever before the Church must be that of efficient service for the bringing in of the Kingdom of God.

This compels me to deal with an extraordinary and disastrous occurrence in the history of the Church. The Church, created to serve the Kingdom, has come to identify itself with the Kingdom, and has claimed for itself the authority of the Kingdom. The servant has replaced the master. It is quite astonishing to see this occurring in Christian history. It shews how poor are the prospects of survival of a spiritual and moral ideal, such as is the Kingdom of God, if it does not possess a loyal and efficient organization to preserve and implement it. This identification of the Church with the Kingdom came about, one might say, quite naturally and unconsciously. There was no conscious disloyalty on the part of the Church's leaders. It seems to have come about thus:

1. The primitive believers and missionaries dropped the term Kingdom of God. It was a dangerous term and no doubt excited the suspicion of the Roman authorities and prompted persecution.¹

2. The Church came to regard admission into its membership by Baptism as necessary to salvation, in

¹ Acts xvii. 7: "There is another Emperor, one Jesus."

short as the equivalent to entry into the Kingdom of God. St. Luke, the companion of St. Paul and the Historian of the Primitive Church, relates how day by day the Lord added to the body of the primitive believers "such as are being saved." *The Epistle to the Ephesians*, the great Epistle of the Church, which inspiringly presents the supreme function of the Church as the unification of mankind by the removal of all conflicting and separatist influences within the membership of the Church itself, did much to exalt the Church, which is described in the Epistle as the Body of Christ, the Bride of Christ, the possessor of all Christ's gifts and graces, she for whom Christ died (v. 25). Within less than a century it became the conviction of the Christian communities that outside the Church there was no salvation—*extra ecclesiam nulla salus*.

In his immensely influential work, *Concerning the Kingdom of God (De Civitate Dei)* St. Augustine clinched the identification of the Kingdom with the Church.

It is not surprising therefore that the Kingdom of God and the Christian Church should have become identified; but it is high time to terminate the Church's usurpation of the "Crown Rights" of the Kingdom. It is needful for the efficiency of the Church as well as for the advancement of the Kingdom that the Church should be restored to its primal place and function as the servant of the Kingdom. It will be no easy matter to get the Church to do this and re-value and reform itself—its organization, institutions, rites and sacraments—in the light of this right relation to the Kingdom. But until this is done, I can see no hope for the increasing and effective influence of the Church in advancing the Kingdom of God in our modern world.

I venture to think that the objections I have attempted

to meet arise from two causes. The first of these causes is an inadequate realization of the spiritual character of our Religion. It is not its institutions, systems, organizations which are its pearl of great price, but the Gospel of the Kingdom and its Spirit of Love, Truth and Freedom. All else is secondary.

As one who was brought up a Tractarian, I value the institutional side of our Church life highly, but I have learnt to value her other possessions more highly—those which I have identified as Basic Christianity. “They are Spirit and they are Life”.

The second cause of the objections put forward is timidity, which may easily identify itself with caution. It is created by a profound sense of trusteeship, a quality highly esteemed in the executive and administrative heads of a venerable society which has inherited great possessions. Nevertheless, for great leadership, especially in times of crisis, courage is as necessary as caution.

“My admirals”, said Napoleon, “win no victories, because they have not learnt that to win victories one must take risks.”

To-day, our nation is risking all to save, not only the British Empire, but the civilized world and, we may hope, the uncivilized world also, from the tyranny of the powers of evil. Why cannot the Church of our nation emulate this courage and place in the fore-front of its mission and message the Kingdom of God which can alone unite mankind in a just, righteous, free and enduring peace?

What the Christian Church has to decide, in its relation to the modern world is whether it is going to be the leaven of the Kingdom of God or the lump of ecclesiastical tradition. I have no doubt myself that the leaven of the Kingdom will ultimately leaven all human

society: I have no doubt that mankind will yet behold the tiny grain of mustard seed of the Kingdom, the smallest of all the seeds the farmer sows on his land, shoot out great branches so that the fowls of the air will come and make their lodging in them. What I do doubt, however, is whether any of our present historic Churches will survive to share in the accomplishment.

CHAPTER VIII

IMPLEMENTING BASIC CHRISTIANITY

IN this address, I propose to deal with the difficult problem of how to implement Basic Christianity as the universal religion of mankind. Who is to implement Basic Christianity? What means are to be used? There seem to me to be four classes of agencies to which believers in Basic Christianity may look for help.

(1) The first of these agencies is the Christian Church or Christian Churches—the mixed and separated multitudes of all who profess and call themselves Christians. Whether help for the establishment of Basic Christianity can be secured from the Churches depends practically upon whether the leaders and ministers of those Churches are prepared to give that help at the present time. I am in doubt myself as to the attitude they will take. I very much doubt whether they would be prepared to accept the claims of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God (outlined in the four questions and answers in my fifth address) as something which they could conscientiously accept and propagate as the Christian Religion. I think many of them would regard it as a truncated, mutilated, debilitated substitute for the “real Christian thing”. I may be wrong in taking this view: indeed, I hope I am.

In 1911, over thirty years ago, I read a paper upon the Kingdom of God to an influential clerical society. In that paper, I urged as I am doing now that loyalty to the Gospel of the Kingdom must be the supreme loyalty of the members of the Christian Church and that all

other loyalties must be subordinated to this supreme loyalty. I venture to cite some passages from that paper which will illustrate my treatment of the theme.

"How does this ideal of the Kingdom bear upon many current ecclesiastical doctrines and practices?

"The change involved in passing from their atmosphere into that of the Kingdom of God is, I venture to think, as great as that involved in leaving a city slum, or even a respectable suburb, to live upon a mountain top.

"I would try to exhibit the practical worth of this thought of the Kingdom in helping us in our work both at home and in the mission-field.

"First at home. The Kingdom is not the Church. A prolonged and critical study of the Gospels seems to show that convincingly. Dr. Sanday—one whose opinion we respect—writes:

"The Kingdom of God is not the theocracy of the Old Testament, nor the eschatological Kingdom of the Apocalypses, nor the Christian Church of the present day, or of the Middle Ages, or of the Fathers' (*Outlines of the Life of Christ*, p. 85).

"The Church is not an end, but a means. Do we not sometimes forget that? Her Apostolic Ministry, her primal Sacraments, her Sacred Writings, are subservient to the purpose for which she exists: they, like her, are instruments of the Kingdom. Should they be the means of advancing the Kingdom, even at the cost of their own destruction, that were no cause for mourning. They exist to serve, and like those angels in the Rabbinical legend, when their service is achieved they may gladly expire. . . .

"This ideal of the Kingdom would surely help us to look with love and reverence upon all other instru-

ments of the Kingdom. The instruments may not be the same as ours, they may be new and not old, they may be civil rather than ecclesiastical, yet in so far as they are advancing the Kingdom we shall regard them with friendly eyes, and assist and promote their welfare when and where we can. All emulation, rivalry, and bitterness, we shall strive to put away from us with all malice. This ideal of the Kingdom, if consistently kept before our eyes, if prayerfully realized in our hearts, can give a strength and calm and success and courage to our efforts which any narrower, lower, poorer view cannot give. Many of our ecclesiastical, social, and political problems melt away or possess comparative insignificance when seen in its pure and radiant light."

"Moreover, the ideal of the Kingdom of God might achieve similar good results in the foreign mission-field. Suppose that instead of going to the heathen with the vast and varied literatures of the Old and New Testaments: suppose that instead of going to them with the metaphysical subtleties of the developed Christian dogmas: suppose that instead of going to them with the ordinances and institutions and organizations of the Christian Church, we went to them first and foremost with the Gospel of the Kingdom—with nothing less and nothing more than that, with no more dogma, no more practice, no more organization than is to be found in our Lord's undoubted teaching of the Kingdom: many of our present difficulties, many of our present divisions would pass away. When the Kingdom was realized in the hearts of converts, their teachers might then superadd, for purposes of keeping alive the ideal of the Kingdom, such dogmas, institutions and organizations as would

best serve under their respective conditions to effect this, and therein they might no doubt introduce much that we find helps to keep it alive in our hearts, and also they might omit much. But the Kingdom first, always first, and only that which promotes it and nourishes it, second. Our missionaries would travel lightly then. To-day they carry too much *impedimenta*—the accumulations of the ages—to move fast. To-day they give even to their converts from heathenism plentiful examples of painful divisions and serious differences. To-day they are so circumstanced that their teaching often exhibits the maximum of intellectual difficulty with the minimum of moral and spiritual power. If this ideal of the Kingdom could be got to dominate their spirit, their teaching, their methods, these obvious difficulties would be largely overcome.

“Am I a visionary? Do I dream waking dreams? Is my statement false and exaggerated that the Kingdom of God was the main and foremost theme of our Lord’s teaching? Is my definition or description of the essential character of that Kingdom untrue? Would not constant devotion to the ideal of the Kingdom in our Church-work, both at home and abroad, produce the effect which I have tried to foreshadow? Is it impossible that the Church, especially our English branch of it, should realize this ideal of the Kingdom?”¹

The paper produced prolonged discussion. The Chairman who later became the Master of the Temple concluded the meeting with these words:

“Some of you have disagreed with some things in

¹ pp. 160-166, *The Gospel of Freedom*, by H. D. A. Major, published by T. Fisher Unwin (1912).

the paper to which you have listened: others have disagreed with other things: for myself, I can only say that I agree with no part of the paper whatsoever."

I was not downhearted. When I considered what difficulties the Apostles of Jesus had had in understanding His teaching about the Kingdom—indeed on more than one occasion they had utterly misunderstood it—could one feel surprised that the successors of the Apostles should have their difficulties about it? On the other hand, I was convinced from what has come down to us of the writings of St. Paul, St. Peter and St. John, that however much their teaching differed in form and in some of its developments from the teaching of Jesus Himself, yet they would all have acknowledged—had it been pressed upon them—the obligation of giving supreme loyalty to the teaching of Him whom St. Paul called the Lord Jesus, whom St. Peter addressed as the Christ and whom St. John described as the Word of Life.

Times have changed since 1911, but so far as the Church of England is concerned I am not sure that they have changed for the better. Then, the Church had a greater hold upon the nation: there were more able men in her Ministry than to-day: she was more liberal, more hopeful, more influential, less split into factions than at the present time. At the Lambeth Conference, after the conclusion of the Great War, hope ran high that the reunion of Christendom might be achieved. A reaction has since set in. Hopes of reunion have been frustrated: theological liberalism has been thwarted by the neo-Calvinism of Barth: the lure of Romanism has exercised a growing influence upon the Anglo-Catholic party: the nation has become increasingly secularized—a melancholy record of deterioration! Nevertheless, all

things are possible for him that has faith, and the second Great War may re-awaken in our English Church the spirit of reform.

If our great English Communion (the *Ecclesia Gentis Anglorum* as the venerable Bede named our Church 1,200 years ago) could achieve this, she would thereby become the greatest agent for the advancement of the Kingdom among mankind. If she refuses to undertake this task, then we must turn—most unwillingly—to seek the help from other agencies. The Kingdom of God must have agents in human society. It would therefore be necessary to create a new agent to carry forward that work for the Kingdom which the Christian Church has shown itself unable to discharge effectively.

It would be only with regret that I should urge taking active steps to create such a Fellowship of the Kingdom. In that case it would have been the Christian Church itself which was responsible for the creation of such a new agency, since it would have been caused by the Church's refusal, tacit or vocal, to simplify and spiritualize our religion in response to urgent human needs. It is the Church's religious superfluities, her ecclesiastical extras, her dogmatic subtleties, her liturgical insincerities, her petty pieties, her wrong valuations and her needless separatisms which are undermining the influence of the Christian Religion upon the English People. It is these ecclesiastical non-essentials even more than all the stress and strain through which the nation is passing which are rendering the thus misrepresented Christian Religion so impossible for many men and women of good will to-day. They need a spiritual home and they are conscious of their need; but the disunited, ineffective Christian Churches are not providing it for the great bulk of the nation.

We do not cast all the blame upon the Christian Churches and their leaders: they are facing immense difficulties. The past has contributed some of these difficulties; but the meanest kind of penitence, so the Primate has declared, is to be penitential for the sins of our forefathers who, after all, did provide us with opportunities which we have failed to turn to good effect.

Again there are all the weaknesses and wilfulnesses of human nature with its combined Divine and animal ancestry.

But there is little good in analyzing minutely the causes of the present disastrous moral and religious situation. What we have to do is to remedy that disastrous situation; and if the Christian Churches are not able to remedy it, then a new agency must be created to accomplish it. It may be rightly asked: 'How do you conceive of this new agency, this Fellowship of the Kingdom, this society for the promotion of Basic Christianity?' I venture here to outline some features of it.

The Faith of the Fellowship of the Kingdom would be expressed in its Creed-Prayer, the Lord's Prayer. No other affirmation of faith would be required. To pray that Creed-Prayer daily from the heart would be the prime expression of loyal membership. The duties of membership would be the daily striving to obey the Two Great Commandments and to realize in character and conduct the ideals of the Seven Beatitudes: the seeking of each member to be in his environment "the salt of the earth" and "the light of the world": and the endeavour to promote by every means in his power the coming of the Kingdom of God among mankind. Membership of the Fellowship would be open to all men and women—whether Christians, Jews, Moham-

medans, or members of any religion or of no religion at all—who desired to be loyal to the Kingdom of God and discharge its duties.

Of course in such a Fellowship men and women would be equal, and all would be eligible for such offices as the organization of the Fellowship might need to create for purposes of education, dissemination and united worship. Here my outline must stop.

This brings me to the third agency to which the promoters of Basic Christianity may hopefully look for help. Happily we are engaged to-day in reforming our national educational system so as to enable it to train all its pupils in accordance with their capacity to become intelligent, conscientious, competent citizens of our great democratic community. The majority of our citizens are convinced that the religious training which would develop in each pupil Christian character, Christian conduct, Christian manners, the Christian spirit, is a needful factor in a reformed, national educational system. Attempts are being made to include the Christian Churches as agents within the framework of our national educational system. We wish that this could be achieved profitably; but our disunited churches, with their conflicting doctrines and practices, and their pre-scientific presentation of religion will, we fear, defeat the desire to rely on them for effective co-operation.

What our nation needs in its national educational system is the refusal to study and teach the Bible and Christian origins except in the light of open-minded, modern critical methods unrestricted by dogmatic, ecclesiastical and sectarian limitations. Without such freedom of research combined with freedom of utterance by the teacher, no modern system can command authority and success to-day in this country.

"Where", said the late Archbishop Frederick Temple, "the conclusions are prescribed, the study is precluded."

So far as I can see, only a modern democratic state—and for such it will be no easy task—would be prepared to do this competently and resolutely through the agency of its national educational system. I am convinced that in this country much the largest and best part of the teaching profession would dutifully and loyally devote themselves to such an enterprise. I believe the same to be true of all the great English speaking Dominions.

But this open minded, modern study of the Bible does not cover all that must be accomplished by a national system of religious education. There has to be in addition: the definite training of the pupil in the fundamental ideals, duties and habits of the Christian life in order to mould his character, conduct and spirit. Now it seems to me that here Basic Christianity has a contribution to make. What could be better for the first stages of this moral and spiritual training than that it should use the ideal of the Kingdom of God, its faith and practice as presented in the four questions and answers concerning it given above?

Of course such training would demand much simple and practical illustration drawn not only from the Bible and especially from the life of the Saviour, but also from the life and character of the great and good men and women of our nation and of other nations.

This preliminary training would occupy all the early years of the pupil's religious educational life. Only when this foundation of religious conduct, character and spirit had been truly laid, could the pupil proceed usefully to the modern critical study of the Bible and of the life of Jesus and of the history of the foundation and

early development of the Christian Church. That is to say the religion of the pupil's mind would develop out of, and follow on, the religion of his spiritual and moral consciousness.

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart (moral consciousness in the Hebrew), and soul and mind and strength".

Moreover, I venture to predict that such a method of national religious education in our schools would react most beneficially on the religious education given in our churches. The churches would be bound in the end to come into line with the national system, if that national system is implemented by thoroughly well-trained and conscientious school masters and school mistresses.

There is a fourth agency which ought not to be neglected in the implementing of Basic Christianity. It is the publicity power of the Press, the Wireless and Public Meetings. In this country it may be claimed that our Press as a whole is "on the side of the Angels". It is loyal to all that it believes to be in the best interests of humanity. This is also certainly true of the B.B.C. If there are some critics who feel that the Press and the B.B.C. might do better, it is well to remember that these great agencies are the servants of the public and cannot go beyond the public taste and demand. In this respect they are almost as restricted as the purveyors of our "pictures" and plays.

"The Drama's laws the Drama's patrons give,
For those who live to please must please to live."

I must now close. The promise and potency of Basic Christianity are great if men and women possessed of good will and good sense are resolved to promote it in

the service of mankind. We do well to remember that the human race is young and the Christian Religion very young indeed and that there is every probability that both have a long life ahead.

"I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away: . . .

And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them and be their God.

And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I am making all things new. And he said unto me, 'Write: for these words are faithful and true'" (Rev. xxi. 1, 3, 5).

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